

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4484

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG CH

SUBJ: PRC COAL PRODUCTION IN 1975 --- SLOW START?

1. DESPITE CLEAR INDICATIONS THAT COAL'S KEY ROLE IN INDUSTRY IS RECOGNIZED AND THAT ATTENTION IS BEING FOCUSED ON RAISING OUTPUT, MEDIA CLAIMS FOR COAL SO FAR IN 1975 HAVE BEEN SCATTERED AND DO NOT AS YET SHOW A CLEAR PICTURE OF HOW THE SECTOR IS RESPONDING. AFTER AN INITIAL CLAIM THAT NATIONWIDE COAL PRODUCTION FOR JANUARY HAD OVERFILLED THE STATE PLAN AND WAS UP SIGNIFICANTLY OVER JANUARY 1974, FEBRUARY AND MARCH HAVE PASSED WITHOUT SIMILAR STATEMENTS.

2. PROVINCIAL CLAIMS HAVE BEEN FEW AND SCATTERED AS HAVE REPORTS FROM INDIVIDUAL MINES AND MINING BUREAUS. ONLY FIVE PROVINCES- KWANGTUNG, KEILUNGKIANG, LIAONING, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHANSI, AND SHANTUNG-- HAVE ANNOUNCED MEETING TARGETS

OR MAKING PERCENTAGE INCREASES FOR JANUARY, FEBURARY OR MARCH OVER THE CORRESPONDING MONTHS OF 1974. WHILE THE LATTER FOUR ARE SIGNIFICANT COAL PRODUCERS, ACCOUNTING FOR OVER A THIRD OF PRC COAL PRODUCTION, THE ABSENCE OF SUPPORTING CLAIMS FOR OTHER PROVINCES DOES NOT INSPIRE CONFIDENCE THAT COAL HAS YET RECOVERED FROM ITS 1974 DOLDRUMS (SEE HONG KONG A-311, DECEMBER 6, 1974).

3. PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND MEDIA ACCOUNTS CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE MAKING DO WITH LOCAL FUNDS AND TECHNICAL INNOVATIONS RATHER THAN RELYIN ON THE STATE FOR HELP. KAILUAN (HOPEI), THE PRC'S LARGEST COAL MINING COMPLEX AND FREQUENTLY HELD UP AS A PACE-SETTING MODEL, WAS PRAISED IN FEBRUARY FOR SEEKING TO EXCEED DESINGED CAPACITY BY 100 PERCENT IN 1975. (IT WAS TOPPED BY 83 PERCENT IN 1974.) THREE OF ITS OLD MINES WERE REPORTED TO HAVE ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED THIS WITHOUT REQUIREING HELP FROM OUTSIDE. NCNA ANNOUNCED APRIL 5 THAT FIRST QUARTER PRODUCTION AT KAILUAN WAS UP 11.46 PERCENT OVER FIRST QUARTER 1974, WHEN IT ALSO WAS A BRIGHT SPOT IN A GENERALLY DISAPPOINTING PICTURE.

4. THIS TONE IN MEDIA COMMENTARY SUGGESTS THAT SIGNIFICANT STATE INVESTMENT WILL NOT BE ANYMORE FORTHCOMING IN 1975 THAN IN 1974 AND ON-MATERIAL IMPUTS (EXHORTATION AND LABOR DISCIPLINE FOR EXAMPLE) WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY THE MAJOR ROLE IN THE EFFORT TO SPUR PRODUCTION. ALTHOUGH IT IS STILL EARLY, IF THESE CONDITIONS PREVAIL, A RAPID UPTURN IN THE TREND OF COAL OUTPUT IN 1975 WOULD APPEAR UNLIKELY.
CROSS

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